

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **FORMER FBI CHIEF AND FEDERAL JUDGE TO ADDRESS STATE JUDGES AT EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

CHICAGO – William S. Sessions, retired federal judge and former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, will be the featured speaker at the plenary session when more than 400 state judges from around Illinois convene for the Supreme Court's third biennial Education Conference on Wednesday, February 4 in Chicago.

Mr. Sessions, who served as honorary co-chair of the American Bar Association's Commission on the 21<sup>st</sup> Judiciary, will examine the issues which challenge and shape America's system of justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Justice Philip J. Rarick of the Supreme Court of Illinois will give the keynote address to the conference participants at a luncheon beginning at noon Wednesday. Mr. Sessions will begin his address at 1:45 p.m., focusing on challenges to justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, including the uncertainty of resources, threats to judicial independence and the level of public trust and confidence in the system.

Then, the participating judges will break into groups for some 35 different programs on topics in criminal, family, civil, evidentiary and other areas of the law. The conference concludes at noon on Friday.

"Judicial independence is the very foundation of our system of justice and a required value for public trust," said Chief Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow about the importance of the Education Conference. "That judicial independence comes to life every day through the professional competence of Illinois' more than 900 judges who sit in court rooms across this state. It is through the consistent demonstration of competence that judges have been able to sustain their independence, and it will be through constant training and professional development through programs like these which will enable all of us to sustain our competence.

"I, my fellow justices on the Supreme Court and all the judges in Illinois welcome Mr. Sessions and all of the participating faculty members of this conference and thank them for sharing with us new ideas, new developments in the law and the new challenges we all face in ensuring a fair and impartial system of justice."

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The conference is held under the authority of the Illinois Supreme Court with planning by its administrative arm, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, and the Education Committee of the Illinois Judicial Conference. The two-day Education Conference reflects the continued implementation of a comprehensive Judicial Education Plan adopted by the Supreme Court in 1998. That plan strongly urged that every Illinois judge attend 15 hours of continuing judicial education annually.

The Education Conference brings together roughly half of the state's Appellate judges and half of the Circuit and Associate judges, offering them a broad outlook of the current state of the judiciary as well as specific areas in which they can build their judicial skills. In addition to specific legal subjects, the conference also features a session on judicial ethics and conduct.

The remaining half of the state's judges will attend a similar two day conference March 31 to April 2. Retired Federal Appeals Court Judge Abner Mikva, who also served as co-chair of the ABA's Committee, will address the plenary session of that conference.

The conference features a faculty of more than 65 Illinois judges plus Professor Neil J. Cohen, a distinguished faculty member of psychology and neurology at the University of Illinois and a member of the Beckman Institute Cognitive Neuroscience Group at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

Prof. Cohen will conduct a program Friday morning, entitled, "How the Brain Remembers, Misremembers and Forgets: The Impact on Witness Testimony." In his three-hour presentation, Dr. Cohen will expand on his presentation to the Illinois Advanced Judicial Academy last June in which he explained how the brain receives, stores and retrieves information and the impact of the processes and characteristics of human memory on witness testimony.

The media are invited to attend Mr. Sessions' address to the plenary session.